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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS: JANATA EMERGES AS
LARGEST PARTY, BUT IS FAR SHORT OF A MAJORITY

REF: NEW DELHI A-61 OF MARCH 20, 1978

1. BIENNIAL ELECTIONS WERE HELD MARCH 27 TO APRIL 3 TO FILL ONE-THIRD OF THE SEATS VACATED THIS YEAR IN THE 244-MEMBER RAJYA SABHA, PARLIAMENT'S UPPER HOUSE. (MEMBERS OF THE RAJYA SABHA ARE ELECTED BY STATE ASSEMBLIES.) THE JANATA PARTY WON 41 SEATS -- MOSTLY FROM THE NORTHERN STATES WHICH IT DOMINATES. THESE, COMBINED WITH THE 26 SEATS WHICH IT RETAINED AFTER THE
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RETIREMENTS OF LAST MONTH, PLUS THE TWO SEATS IT WON IN RAJYA SABHA BY-ELECTIONS, GIVES THE RULING PARTY A TOTAL OF 69 SEATS IN THE UPPER HOUSE. JANATA IS THUS THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN THE RAJYA SABHA, BUT IS STILL FAR SHORT OF EVEN A SIMPLE MAJORITY. MRS. GANDHI'S CONGRESS (I) FARED AS EX-PECTED, GAINING 14 SEATS. THESE, ALONG WITH THE 45 SEATS IT RETAINED, GIVE CONGRESS (I) A TOTAL OF 59 MEMBERS. THE OF-

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FICIAL CONGRESS MANAGED TO WIN ONLY FOUR SEATS; ITS TOTAL STRENGTH OF 52 MEMBERS MAKES IT THE THIRD-RANKING PARTY IN THE UPPER HOUSE. OF THE OTHER NATIONAL PARTIES, THE TOTAL STRENGTH OF THE PRO-SOVIET CPI HAS BEEN REDUCED FROM ELEVEN TO NINE MEMBERS, WHILE THE CPM HAS INCREASED ITS REPRESENTATION FROM FIVE TO EIGHT SEATS.

2. AS EXPECTED, THE JANATA WON THE BULK OF ITS SEATS IN THE NORTH, WINNING NINE OUT OF ELEVEN SEATS IN U.P., FIVE OUT OF SEVEN IN BIHAR AND FOUR OUT OF FIVE IN MADHYA PRADESH. HOWEVER, IN SEVERAL CONTESTS THE OUTCOME ANTICIPATED BY THE JANATA DID NOT ACTUALLY COME ABOUT, BECAUSE PARTY MLA'S DID NOT FOLLOW THEIR LEADERS' INSTRUCTIONS AND VIOLATED THE PARTY WHIP. IN WEST BENGAL, FOR INSTANCE, THE JANATA'S STRENGTH IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY IS SUCH THAT IT COULD HAVE ELECTED ONE CANDIDATE SAFELY. JANATA VOTES, HOWEVER, WERE SPLIT BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL PARTY NOMINEE AND A REBEL JANATA CANDIDATE; THE RESULT WAS THAT ALL FIVE SEATS FROM WEST BENGAL WERE WON BY LEFT FRONT CANDIDATES (THREE FROM THE CPM AND ONE EACH FROM THE FORWARD BLOC AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY). IN BIHAR AND RAJASTHAN, IT APPEARS THAT CROSS-VOTING (I.E., VIOLATING PARTY INSTRUCTIONS) BY JANATA MLA'S RESULTED IN THE DEFEAT OF ONE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE IN EACH STATE BY A "REBEL" JANATA CONTESTANT. ALTHOUGH EACH OF THE TWO "REBELS" IS CONSIDERED TO BE A JANATA
MEMBER, THE FACT THAT THEY DEFEATED
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THE OFFICIAL PARTY NOMINEES IS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE CONTINUING INDISCIPLINE WITHIN JANATA RANKS WHICH IS THE FOCUS OF GROWING CONCERN BY PARTY LEADERS. (SINCE BALLOTING IS SECRET IN RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE PRECISELY HOW WIDESPREAD WAS THE CROSS-VOTING IN BIHAR AND RAJASTHAN OR WHAT ITS BASIS WAS.)

3. CONGRESS (I) WON THE BULK OF ITS SEATS FROM THE TWO STATES WHICH IT CAPTURED IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY, KARNATAKA AND ANDHRA PRADESH. THE OFFICIAL CONGRESS WON TWO SEATS IN MAHARASHTRA AND ONE EACH IN ASSAM AND U.P.

4. AMONG THE IMPORTANT JANATA PARTY FIGURES ELECTED ARE GENERAL SECRETARY RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE FROM KARNATAKA, PILOO MODY FROM GUJARAT, FORMER DMK LEADER ERA SEZHIYAN FROM TAMIL NADU, AND THE RAJMATA OF GWALIOR, MRS. VIJAYRAJE SCINDIA, FROM MADHYA PRADESH. OTHER MAJOR JANATA FIGURES ELECTED WERE SURENDRA MOHAN (THE PARTY ORGANIZER IN THE SOUTH) FROM U.P., SHEIKH ABDUL REHMAN FROM U.P. AND FORMER DELHI UNIVERSITY VICE CHANCELLOR DR. SARUP SINGH FROM HARYANA. KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI IS THE MOST PROMINENT CONGRESS (I) FIGURE TO BE ELECTED. HE WON THE SOLE "SAFE" SEAT WHICH THE PARTY COULD GAIN IN HIS

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HOME STATE OF U.P. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF MRS. GANDHI, TRIPATHI RECENTLY WAS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AS THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE RAJYA SABHA AFTER DEFECTIONS HAD MADE THE CONGRESS (I) THE LARGEST OPPOSITION PARTY IN THE HOUSE. OTHER NOTABLE CONGRESS (I) VICTORS WERE A.P. SHARMA (FROM BIHAR) AND B.P. MAURYA (FROM ANDHRA); BOTH WERE MINISTERS OF STATE IN MRS. GANDHI'S GOVERNMENT. GENERAL SECRETARY K.C. PANT, WHO WAS A FULL MINISTER IN MRS. GANDHI'S CABINET, WAS THE MOST PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE OFFICIAL CONGRESS WHO WAS ELECTED.

5. ELECTIONS TO FILL THREE OTHER VACANT SEATS -- ONE EACH FROM JAMMU AND KASHMIR, ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND MIZORAM -- WILL BE HELD LATER IN THE YEAR. IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THE PRESI-
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DENT IS EXPECTED TO SELECT FOUR PERSONS TO FILL THE NOMINATED MEMBERS SEATS WHICH FELL VACANT THIS YEAR.

6. WE ARE POUCHING TO ADDRESSEES THE PARTY BREAKDOWN IN THE RAJYA SABHA WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM THESE BIENNIAL ELECTIONS. OFFICIAL FIGURES WILL ONLY BE AVAILABLE WHEN THE UPPER HOUSE RECONVENES IN THE LAST WEEK OF APRIL. AT THAT TIME, MEMBERS WILL BE ASKED TO DECLARE THEIR ARTY AFFILIATIONS, AND THERE SEEMS TO BE A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT THE RANKS OF THE CONGRESS (I) WILL BE SWELLED AS A RESULT OF FURTHER DEFECTIONS FROM THE OFFICIAL CONGRESS.
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